



**NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND
NOTICE OF PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING REGARDING THE
PROPOSED INDIAN WELLS VALLEY GROUNDWATER AUTHORITY IMPORTED PIPELINE
PROJECT**

Notice is hereby given that the Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority (IWVGA) will be the Lead Agency and prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Imported Water Pipeline Project (Project). IWVGA has determined that an EIR must be prepared for the Project prior to making any final decision regarding whether to approve the Project in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The IWVGA Board of Directors will consider the EIR when determining how to move forward with the Project.

IWVGA is requesting any responsible/trustee/cooperating agency or interested person to participate, review, and provide input on how the Project may affect the environment. If you are an authorized representative of an agency with authorization of facilities that may be affected, IWVGA needs to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information that is relevant to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the Project. Agencies will need to use the EIR when considering permits or other approvals. Please provide the name, address, telephone number and email address of the contact person for your agency.

IWVGA is seeking an examination of scope and content of the goals, objectives, policies, and actions to guide and protect the physical, environmental, economic, and social conditions on lands and in the surrounding communities within the proposed pipeline alignment.

Project Title: Imported Water Pipeline Project

Project Applicant: Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority
100 W California Avenue
Ridgecrest, CA. 93555

Project Location:

The Project is located between the Cities of California City and Ridgecrest, in Kern County, California (see attached Figure 1). The Project begins in the City of California City at 35°06'55.20" N and 117°56'07.10" W. The centroid of the Project site is 35°22'37.4" N and 117°52'06.46" W. The Project ends in the City of Ridgecrest at 35°35'09.20" N and 117°42'14.61" W. Affected roadways include Redwood Boulevard, Neuralia Road, Redrock Randsburg Road, State Highway 395, and South China Lake Boulevard.

Project Description:

The IWVGA proposes up to a 24" diameter, 50-mile imported water pipeline, three booster pump stations, and a regulating station starting from the Antelope Valley-East Kern Water Agency (AVEK) California City Feeder pipeline in California City to the Indian Wells Valley Water District's (IWWVD) Ridgecrest Heights Water Storage Tank southwest of Ridgecrest. The three proposed booster pump stations and proposed regulation station would be necessary to pump the water over the El Paso Mountains located between

California City and Ridgecrest. The pipeline would terminate at a new receiving water storage tank at IWWVD's Ridgecrest Heights Storage Tank Facility. Approximately 20.6 miles of pipeline would pass through land owned by the United States Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

The route traverses or is adjacent to twenty-nine (29) parcels of private owners or trusts, twenty-three (23) parcels owned by either companies or corporations, and seven (7) private conservation parcels. It also traverses twenty-six (26) parcels on BLM land and two (2) parcels on the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Fremont Valley Ecological Reserve.

For much of the alignment along Redwood Boulevard and Neuralia Road, the pipeline would be constructed in either the City of California City road right-of-way (ROW) or Kern County ROW, but the work may require some additional temporary construction easements with private landowners for laydown of materials and stockpiling of backfill materials. The pipeline would remain within the Neuralia Road ROW to avoid parcels with existing solar farms and the parcels owned by the Honda Corporation for the Honda Test Track, north of the city limits of California City.

Objectives and Goals:

The pipeline is necessary to comply with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), which requires the Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Basin to be sustainably managed by 2040. In July 2016, the IWVGA was formed through a Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement for the purpose of forming a Groundwater Sustainability Agency to manage the Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Basin (Basin) and to implement SGMA requirements, including the development of a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). The IWVGA consists of the following voting member agencies: City of Ridgecrest, Indian Wells Valley Water District, County of Kern, County of Inyo, and County of San Bernardino. Non-voting associate members of the Board of Directors include the BLM and the United States Navy, Naval Air Weapons Station (NAWS) China Lake.

The Basin is located east of the southern Sierra Nevada Mountain Range in the State of California with an area of approximately 382,000 acres underlying portions of Inyo, Kern, and San Bernardino Counties. The Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Basin is identified by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) as Basin No. 6-054 in Bulletin 118. The Basin has been designated by DWR as a critically overdrafted basin. Significant overdraft conditions have existed for decades as a result of groundwater pumping that exceeds the natural Basin yield. Between 2011 and 2015, pumping from the Basin was approximately four times the amount of inflow into the Basin and it is estimated the annual loss of groundwater in storage is approximately 25,000 ac-ft per year. The Basin serves as the sole source of potable water supply for residents and other water users; there are currently no imported water supply sources available to the Basin. The IWVGA GSP for the Basin recommended management actions and projects, including this pipeline, that are required to achieve Basin sustainability. The GSP was approved by DWR on January 13, 2022.

The goal of the imported water pipeline is to bring as estimated 6,431 acre-ft of water per year (AFY) into the Basin by 2070 by delivering it to IWWVD and allowing IWWVD to shut off some of its groundwater wells and base load its system with the imported water. The proposed pipeline facility would be used to convey water from other sources through AVEK's system to the Basin. The sustainability goal is to preserve the Basin's groundwater resource as a sustainable water supply, to continue to provide the residents with quality drinking water, and to sustain the mission of the China Lake NAWS.

Up to three (3) booster pump stations and a regulating station would be required to boost water over the highpoint elevation of 3,514 feet in the El Paso Mountains along Highway 395. Booster Pump Station No.

1 (Mile 27.1 of the alignment) would be located along Redrock Randsburg Road on a private parcel. Booster Station No. 2 (Mile 33.1 of the alignment), Booster Station No. 3 (Mile 37.2 of alignment) and a regulating station (Mile 37.5 of the alignment) would be located on BLM land.

The lack of existing sub-transmission and distribution power lines adjacent to two of the three booster pump stations and the regulating station and the potential lack of available capacity in the adjacent existing sub-transmission and distributions lines near two of these locations would require IWVGA to work with Southern California Edison (SCE) to construct the necessary power facilities. This could include transmission lines and substations to power two booster pump stations and the regulating station. There is an existing SCE 33kV transmission line along Neuralia Road, north of California City, that continues to the east on the northerly side of Redrock Randsburg Road before splitting in a southeasterly direction that parallels Redrock Randsburg Road into Randsburg. East of the Redrock Randsburg Road – Garlock Road fork there are no existing SCE sub-transmission or distribution power lines available along the alignment until there is a 12kV overhead line that parallels Highway 395 heading north from the intersection of Highway 395 and Searles Station Road. Along portions of Highway 395, a dirt access road would be constructed during grading activities. The access road would support the movement of trucks and equipment utilized during construction of the Project and utilized for continued operational and maintenance (O&M) activities.

The Project pipeline would be approximately 20 to 24 inches in diameter and would consist of both cement mortar lined and coated steel pipe, high-density polyethylene pipe, and possibly polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe. PVC pipe, if used, would be utilized in locations where lower pressures exist.

For the most part, construction of the pipeline would require trench excavation. Other areas would include trenchless crossings such as auger boring, open-shield pipe jacking, horizontal directional drilling, and/or micro-tunneling. An estimated total of fifteen (15) crossings of ephemeral water courses would be completed. Eight (8) trenchless crossings would be horizontal directional drilling and the seven (7) remaining trenchless crossings would be auger boring or open-shield pipe jacking. High density polyethylene pipe would be used where horizontal directional drilling is required to cross under a drainage crossing or creek.

Public Review and Scoping Meeting:

Comments on the proposed scope and content of the EIR may be submitted in writing to the attention of:

April Keigwin - IWVGA Clerk of the Board of Directors
100 W California Ave., Ridgecrest, CA. 93555
Phone: (805) 764-5452
Email: akeigwin@rgs.ca.gov

Dena E. Giacomini, Principal Planner, Environmental Project Manager
Provost & Pritchard Consulting Group
1800 30th Street, Suite 280
Bakersfield, CA 93301
Phone: (661) 616-5900 ext.721
Email: dgiacomini@ppeng.com

Comments in response to the Notice of Preparation will be accepted from August 1, 2023 through August 30, 2023. Persons with questions or requests for information may also use the above contact information.

All written scoping comments should reference Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority Imported Water Pipeline Project. Please include your name, address, and phone number, and/or email so that we may contact you for clarification, if necessary.

All supporting documents can also be found at <https://iwvga.org/>.

Pursuant to Section 15083 of the CEQA Guidelines, Public Scoping Meetings will be held to solicit public comments on the scope and content of the EIR. The Public Scoping Meetings will be held as follows:

In the City of Ridgecrest

Date: Wednesday, August 23rd, 2023

Time: 5:30 P.M. to 7:00 P.M.

Place: Kerr McGee Community Center. Located at 100 W California Avenue, Ridgecrest, CA 93555

In California City:

Date: Thursday, August 24, 2023

Time: 5:30 P.M. to 7:00 P.M.

Place: Kern County Library - California City Branch. Located at 9507 California City Blvd, California City, CA 93505

Newspaper Notice of Preparation Published:

Ridgecrest Daily Independent, July 26, 2023.

Mojave Desert News, July 27, 2023.

Summary

Potential Environmental Effects: The Draft EIR will describe the significant direct and indirect environmental impacts of the Project. The Draft EIR also will evaluate the cumulative impacts of the Project, defined as impacts that could be exacerbated when considered in conjunction with other related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. The IWVGA anticipates that the Project could result in potentially significant environmental impacts in the following resource areas, which will be further evaluated in the draft EIR: Aesthetics, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Noise, Tribal Cultural Resources, Utilities and Service Systems, and Wildfire.

These potential impacts will be analyzed and discussed in detail in the Draft EIR, and feasible and practicable mitigation measures will be recommended to reduce any identified significant or potentially significant impacts. The discussion in the draft EIR will also include an alternatives analysis.

The IWVGA anticipates that the Project would not result in significant environmental impacts in the following resource areas, which will not be further evaluated in the draft EIR: Agricultural and Forestry Resources, Energy, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, and Transportation.

Potential Approvals and Permits Required: Elements of the Project could be subject to permitting and/or approval authority of other agencies. As the lead agency pursuant to CEQA, the IWVGA is responsible for considering the adequacy of the Draft EIR. Other potential permits required from other agencies could include:

Permitting Agency	Permit Type	Notes
California Regional Water Quality Control Board	Waste Discharge Permit	Waters of the State
California Regional Water Quality Control Board	General Construction Permit (SWPPP)	Water Quality
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement	1602 for jurisdictional desert washes
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Incidental Take Permit for Desert Tortoise	Needed if there is "take" of habitat or species
United States Fish and Wildlife Service	Incidental Take Permit for Desert Tortoise	Needed if there is "take" of habitat or species
United States Fish and Wildlife Service	Biological Opinion	Determination on whether or not a Federal action is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat.
Bureau of Land Management	Special Use Permit	To encroach on BLM land
California Department of Parks and Recreation	Special Use Permit*	To encroach on park land
Kern County Roads	Franchise agreement	To utilize road right of way
City of California City	Encroachment permit	To utilize road right of way
City of Ridgecrest	Encroachment permit	To utilize road right of way

Permitting Agency	Permit Type	Notes
Union Pacific Railroad	Encroachment permit	To utilize railroad right of way
California Department of Transportation	Encroachment permit	To utilize road right of way
Sequoia River Lands Trust	Memorandum of Understanding	Private Conservation Easement
California State Lands Commission	Lease Agreement	Public trust analysis, best interest of the State, and regulatory compliance
Southern California Edison	Encroachment permit	Would include review of plans by Cal ISO for crossing major high voltage transmission line crossings.
West Mojave Conservation Bank	Compliance with Incidental take permit	Mitigation Bank Credits for Mohave ground squirrels

Figure 1 – IWVGA Imported Pipeline Alignment Alternatives

